

# ALBERTA SHUT OUT OF STANLEY CUP FUN

## By Bruce Penton, April 23 2018

There's no joy in Cowtown this spring as the Stanley Cup playoffs unfold all across North America. As for the City of Champions where the Oilers play? That's a title right out of Comedy Central. It wasn't supposed to be this way in Alberta. No playoff hockey this spring. And prospects are dim for much of a different story next year.

So what happened? Calgary Flames made the playoffs last year and even though they went out in the first round against Anaheim Ducks, coach Glen Gulutzan and general manager Brad Treliving did nothing but strengthen the roster in the off-season, adding goalie Mike Smith, getting long in the tooth at 36, and defenceman Travis Harmonic, among others. Sophomore Matthew Tkachuk nearly doubled his goal output, scoring 24 after a 13-goal rookie season.

In Edmonton, Oilers fans were proclaiming their club as a team of the future after a decade languishing in the lower depths of the league and building a supposed powerhouse with a raft of high first-round draft picks. Connor McDavid, the best player in the world, would be the centrepiece of the resurgence but after a playoff appearance and a first-round victory last spring, the Oilers hit the dysfunction button this year and never came close to making the playoffs.

Fans in both cities are calling for changes, but what can anyone expect? Treliving mortgaged a good chunk of Calgary's immediate future by trading draft picks in the Smith and Harmonic acquisitions. As a result, Calgary has neither a first- or second-round draft choice this summer. Oilers fans are calling for the head of GM Peter Chiarelli, who two years ago traded an A-list forward, Taylor Hall, to New Jersey for a B-list defenceman, Adam Larsson. Oilers fans drool at the thought of a never-will-happen offence led by McDavid and Hall.

To date, Gulutzan and Edmonton's Todd McLellan still have their head-coaching jobs, and probably don't deserve to hit the unemployment line this summer, but you can't fire the players, right? Winnipeg Jets and Toronto Maple Leafs seem to have found the right answers after years of suffering, and there's no doubt power in the NHL is cyclical, so while the Flames and Oilers look for roster improvement, their fans would be advised to draft Patience No. 1 if they had a pick.

- **RJ Currie** of sportsdeke.com: "**Danica Patrick** said she's going to the Indy 500 to win it. It could happen. Now excuse me while I go onto Twitter to ask **Gal Gadot** to marry me."
- **Tim Layden** of SI.com, on Masters champ **Patrick Reed**'s popularity with peers and fans: "If Augusta is a church, Reed is the mischievous little boy in the back, putting food colouring in the Holy Water. And it shows."
- **Brad Rock** of the Deseret News, on former Utah Jazz player **Trey Lyles** unloading on Salt Lake, the Jazz and coach **Quin Snyder** in a podcast last week. "He went on to list the worst cities in the NBA. 'Utah should be there,' he said. Other cities making Lyles' list: Michigan, Wisconsin, Tennessee and California."
- Headline in the [onion.com](#): "**Dez Bryant** could be perfect fit for NFL team lacking locker-room cancer."
- **Mike Bianchi** of the Orlando Sentinel: "The Jacksonville Jaguars dumped their longest-tenured player — tight end **Mercedes Lewis** — after 12 seasons earlier this week. Sadly, this is just what happens when your Mercedes gets too many miles on it!"
- **RJ Currie** again: "**Dwight Howard** notched the NBA's first 30-point, 30-rebound game in 36 years. He's set to tie **Wilt Chamberlain**'s mark if he can repeat the feat — 123 more times."
- **Conan O'Brien** of TBS: "One of the world's top Donkey Kong players has been stripped of his records for cheating. He was going to be sentenced to life, but turns out he doesn't have one."
- Golfer **Dustin Johnson**, to the New York Post, on why the specter of a huge wedding with longtime partner **Paulina Gretzky** don't faze him: "That bill is going to Wayne."
- **Janice Hough** of leftcoastsportsbabe.com, after the Phillies beat the Marlins 20-1: "MLB doesn't need a pitch clock, it needs a mercy rule."
- Ex-Florida State football coach **Bobby Bowden**, 88, on getting old: "(Wife) Ann was going to let me hide my own Easter eggs this year."
- **Dwight Perry** of the Seattle Times: "Reporter **A.J. Bayatpour** of Milwaukee's WITI-TV is off the air — at least temporarily — following his arrest for allegedly punching reporter **Ben Jordan** of rival station WTMJ three times at a Brewers-Cubs game. Well, duh — three strikes and you're out."
- One more from **RJ Currie**, on U.S. gold-medal curler **Joe Polo** naming his daughter **Ailsa** after the Scottish island that produces the stone for curling rocks: "The kid already feels taken for granite."

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